

Pikmiktalik River salmon escapement enumeration and sampling study

Abstract: Much of the salmon subsistence harvest of the communities of Stebbins and St. Michael occurs on the Pikmiktalik River. This river is part of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and is the site of one of only a few Federal subsistence fisheries in the Norton Sound area. Local residents strongly feel that availability of in- and post-season escapement information would improve management of these fishery resources. Kawerak, Inc., in cooperation with the Stebbins and St Michael IRAs, conducted a salmon escapement enumeration and sampling project on the Pikmiktalik River from June 18 to August 6, 2003. This project provided baseline information regarding salmon abundance, run-timing and biological (age, sex, and length) data to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Total estimated escapements were 345 Chinook *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*, 7,707 chum *O. keta*, 13,165 pink *O. gorbuscha*, and 87 coho *O. kisutch* salmon. Additionally, a total of 527 Dolly Varden *Salvelinus malma* and 915 whitefish *Coregonus sp.* were recorded. Age, sex and length data collected from chum salmon indicated that the most abundant age class was 4 year olds (produced by 1999 brood year) which accounted for 82.8% of the total sample and represented 6,381 of the estimated escapement. The ratio of male to female chum salmon was about 50:50. Males were generally longer than females, and older salmon were generally longer than younger salmon. Continuation of this project in future years would provide valuable escapement data for use in management of these fisheries resources.

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